

Thomas Jefferson to Henry Dearborn, July 7, 1807, The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO THE SECRETARY AT WAR J. MSS. (HENRY DEARBORN.)

Washington, July 7, 1807.

Dear Sir, —I enclose you copies of 2 letters sent by express from Capt. Decatur. By these you will perceive that the British commanders have their foot on the threshold of war. They have begun the blockade of Norfolk; have sounded the passage to the town, which appears practicable for three of their vessels, & menace an attack on the *Chesapeake* and *Cybele*. These, with 4. gun-boats, form the present defence, & there are 4. more gun-boats in Norfolk nearly ready. The 4. gun-boats at Hampton are hauled up, & in danger, 4. in Mopjack bay are on the stocks. Blows may be hourly possible. In this state of things I am sure your own feelings will anticipate the public judgment, that your presence here cannot be dispensed with. There is nobody here who can supply your knowledge of the resources for land co-operation, & the means for bringing them into activity. Still, I would wish you would stay long enough at N York to settle with the V. P. & Colo. Williams, the plan of defence for that place; & I am in hopes you will also see Fulton's experiments tried, & see how far his means may enter into your plan. But as soon as that is done, should matters remain in their present critical state, I think the public interest and safety would suffer by your absence from us. Indeed, if the present state of things continues, I begin to fear we shall not be justifiable in separating this autumn, & that even an earlier meeting of Congress than we had contemplated, may be requisite. I salute you affectionately.